

## Community resources

[Follow us on Twitter](#) [Check our Reddit](#) [Twitter this](#) [Digg this page](#) [Contact us on IRC](#)

*courage is contagious*

## Viewing cable 06BEIRUT2529, TFLE01: NASSIB LAHOUD OFFERS ADVICE FOR THE DAY

If you are new to these pages, please read an introduction on the [structure of a cable](#) as well as how to [discuss them](#) with others. See also the [FAQs](#)

### Understanding cables

Every cable message consists of three parts:

- The top box shows each cables unique reference number, when and by whom it originally was sent, and what its initial classification was.
- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
- The bottom box presents the body of the cable. The opening can contain a more specific subject, references to other cables ([browse by origin](#) to find them) or additional comment. This is followed by the main contents of the cable: a summary, a collection of specific topics and a comment section.

To understand the justification used for the classification of each cable, please use this [WikiSource](#) article as reference.

### Discussing cables

If you find meaningful or important information in a cable, please link directly to its unique reference number. Linking to a specific paragraph in the body of a cable is also possible by copying the appropriate link (to be found at the paragraph symbol). Please mark messages for social networking services like Twitter with the hash tags **#cablegate** and a hash containing the reference ID e.g. **#06BEIRUT2529**.

Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
<a href="#">06BEIRUT2529</a>	<a href="#">2006-08-03 17:09</a>	<a href="#">2011-08-30 01:44</a>	<a href="#">CONFIDENTIAL//NOFORN</a>	<a href="#">Embassy Beirut</a>

Appears in these articles:

[not](#)  
[yet](#)  
[set](#)

VZCZCXRO9792  
OO RUEHAG RUEHBC RUEHDE RUEHKUK  
DE RUEHLB #2529/01 2151709  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
O 031709Z AUG 06  
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4887  
INFO RUEHKK/ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RUEHEE/ARAB LEAGUE COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO PRIORITY 0012  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY  
RHMFISS/CDR USCENCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BEIRUT 002529

SIPDIS

NOFORN  
SIPDIS

NSC FOR ABRAMS/DORAN/SINGH/HARDING

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/02/2016

TAGS: [IS](#) [LE](#) [MOPS](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [SY](#)  
SUBJECT: TFLE01: NASSIB LAHOUD OFFERS ADVICE FOR THE DAY  
AFTER

Classified By: Ambassador Jeffrey Feltman. Reason: Section 1.4 (b).

SUMMARY

-----

¶1. (C/NF) Displaying notable resilience and cautious optimism despite the difficult conditions his country faces, pro-reform leader Nassib Lahoud advised the Embassy that the most critical element in preventing a Hizballah "victory" after the war is to take the lead in the reconstruction of post-conflict Lebanon. Acknowledging the numerous risks involved, Lahoud maintained that a comprehensive reconstruction effort achieves three imperatives: deprives Hizballah of the governmental vacuum it needs to reassert its control over the south; allows/encourages the return of the Shia population to the south, and finally, ensures that the Lebanese economy expands rapidly to prevent a national collapse of confidence. Taking an unexpected tack for a March 14 leader, Lahoud advised USG not to try to blame Hizballah for the destructive conflict -- let the Lebanese people come to that conclusion by themselves. Instead, he strongly advised USG to engineer the rebirth of the south and compel the many nations now pledging funds to live up to their commitments. But Lahoud also somberly noted that the Hizballah stronghold of South Beirut will be the most difficult challenge in any reconstruction effort -- far more than south Lebanon. End summary.

¶2. (C/NF) Former Lebanese ambassador to the US. and veteran anti-Syrian politician Nassib Lahoud met the Ambassador and poloff on August 2. Despite the damage inflicted on his country, he expressed his hope that IDF's continuing operations would materially degrade Hizballah's military strength -- the key to its power in Lebanon. But he warned that Hizballah's leadership would try to claim victory no matter how damaged it is when it emerges from the conflict.

¶3. (C/NF) Without stating his sources, Lahoud said the extent of damage inflicted on Hizballah was somewhere between the claims of IDF and the organization itself. He is certain their civil infrastructure in south Beirut and south Lebanon is basically wiped out, but their leadership and the great majority of their fighters have survived. Even so, the elimination of this infrastructure was a significant achievement, and an important opportunity that could be taken advantage of in the post-conflict reconstruction phase.

"CHANGE YOUR TIME HORIZON"

-----

¶4. (C/NF) Commenting on the growing anti-American sentiment in Lebanon, Lahoud said emotions were understandably high and the sentiment was to be expected. Instead of trying to fight the almost inexorable short-term phenomenon, he advised us to focus on the post-conflict phase, because that is where the natural strengths of the US would be most effective -- and most damaging to Hizballah. If the US took the lead, and partnered with the Government of Lebanon, on a comprehensive, well executed reconstruction, he believed Hizballah's thunder could be stolen.

¶5. (C/NF) Right now, he noted, the international community is ready to pledge significant amounts of aid and reconstruction assistance, but without US leadership, these good intentions were likely to evaporate -- and with it the chance to develop a stable, democratic Lebanon. He urged us to seize the day (after) and formulate, with the Government of Lebanon and our international partners, a reconstruction plan that would stabilize the south and reverse the destabilizing flood of Shia IDPs that have fled north.

¶6. (C/NF) Lahoud argued that the Shia of the south want to return to their ancestral homeland, but will not return to a wasteland. In his view, if there are real jobs (from a

Government-coordinated reconstruction effort) with respectable pay, the Shia IDPs currently living in crowded, sterile shelters in Beirut, Sidon, and elsewhere will flow back at a rate that will calm confessional tensions and, just possibly, restore some credibility to the Government in the south -- where it has been invisible for decades.

AN ALTERED POLITICAL CALCULUS  
-----

BEIRUT 00002529 002 OF 002

17. (C/NF) Lahoud, an astute and knowledgeable observer of Lebanese politics, expressed quiet incredulity at Michel Aoun's continuing trumpeting of his now badly-tattered joint FPM/Hizballah communique of February 6. Like many other in the Maronite community, Lahoud said Aoun's power is definitely slipping and his day in the sun nearly over. His one remaining trump card in the Christian community was that he has so few able competitors.

18. (C/NF) Lahoud, long opposed to Syrian interference in Lebanon, urged the US and the international community to support and indeed strengthen the efforts of Serge Brammertz and the UNIIIC to pursue both the assassins of former Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri, and the persons responsible for the campaign of political violence unleashed against pro-reform leaders of Lebanon over the past two years. Lahoud believes that President Bashar al-Asad thinks he has dodged the UNIIIC bullet and it would completely confound him if Mr. Brammertz' investigative team re-applied themselves with renewed vigor.  
FELTMAN